

# **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 to 2029**

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## 1.0 Introduction

Homelessness can have a profound impact on the lives of those affected. This strategy identifies and explores key themes and trends around homelessness, and sets the priorities for how Crawley Borough Council, together with our partner organisations and agencies are going to address housing and homelessness in Crawley between 2025 and 2029.

Over the course of the previous strategy global events such as the Covid pandemic created widespread financial instability that had a profound effect on the housing market. Subsequent events have driven a cost-of-living crisis, pushing more households to lose or be at risk of losing their home. It is important that this strategy be sufficiently flexible to respond to the changing environment in which services are being delivered.

This strategy has been in development throughout 2024, following on from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2019 to 2023 (“the review”) published separately. The findings of the review underpin and inform this strategy. Together, they form a unified and clear picture of the current state of housing and homelessness in Crawley, as well as challenges and opportunities for the future, and shape the pathway for the council for the next five years.

The council consulted on its draft strategy during the autumn of 2024, and using feedback from the consultation process, the strategy was updated and amended as necessary. From the review, strategy and consultation, an action plan was developed that sets out how the council and its partner agencies will deliver the commitments over the life of the strategy. The action plan will be monitored quarterly and updated annually so that it stays relevant and responsive to the ever-changing environment services are operating within.

Crawley has always benefited from an active housing delivery programme, working alongside registered provider partners to deliver quality housing for its residents, yet there remains a significant need for additional affordable housing in the borough. The pressure from increasing homeless approaches and the resulting increasing use of and expenditure on temporary accommodation has placed unprecedented strain on the council’s financial resources. In February 2024 Crawley Borough Council took the decision to declare a housing emergency. By declaring a housing emergency, the council drew attention to the situation and highlighted the need for greater support and action from government who hold many of the key levers needed to address the crisis. The Council continue to actively lobby for additional resources to respond to the growing and complex challenges it faces.

## 1.1 Achievements

Since the implementation of the previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy in 2019, the council have made significant progress in meeting its strategic housing and homelessness goals:

- the council and its registered provider partners have delivered over 650 new build homes at social and affordable rents over the past five years
- over 1500 households have had their homelessness prevented or relieved and a further 700 households owed a main duty have been accommodated into either the private rented sector or social housing
- working in partnership with external agencies, the creation of a multidisciplinary team comprising of a Rough Sleeper Coordinator, Drug & Alcohol Outreach Worker, Mental Health Outreach Worker, Outreach/In-reach Worker, Resettlement Outreach Worker and Day Centre Resettlement Worker, who deliver holistic, person-centred services to people sleeping rough in Crawley
- working alongside our partner agencies and organisations, the delivery of 20 bed spaces for people who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping, with an additional 15 in progress including a housing-led pilot project
- broadening the frequency, timing and extent of rough sleeper outreach service delivery to provide more frequent and comprehensive coverage across the borough

## 1.2 Challenges

Despite the achievements and progress made over the last five years, the council face significant challenges to deliver the objectives of this strategy.

- the council faces rising costs due to inflation and its ability to generate income to fund services has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis
- the supply of new build social and affordable housing has been heavily impacted by Natural England's decision to impose restrictions on development due to water neutrality issues. This is set to continue into the period covered by this strategy
- in response to rents in the private rented sector remaining expensive and continuing to rise, our ability to access the sector has halved. The shortfall between rents and the Local Housing Allowance being the most significant barrier to accessing the private rented sector
- increasing numbers of larger families are approaching the council as homeless, increasing the need for larger temporary and settled housing options. Housing stock in Crawley comprises predominantly of three-bedroom houses. With fewer four or five bedroom properties available, the demand for them is disproportionately higher than the demand for smaller properties

- sustained elevated house prices continue to leave home ownership out of reach for many Crawley residents. Combined with elevated rental costs, young people have limited housing options available to them, driving them to remain living with parents for longer until this arrangement is no longer sustainable and they approach the council for assistance. Eviction from the parental home remains one of the most common causes of homelessness within Crawley
- increased demand into the homelessness service has led to the use and cost of temporary accommodation (particularly nightly paid options) rising significantly. Combined with average nightly rates almost doubling over the past five years, expenditure on temporary accommodation has risen and the impact on the council is not financially sustainable without additional government funding
- the wider demand for temporary accommodation has become so high that other local authorities and temporary accommodation providers are coming into the borough, raising costs and reducing availability locally
- customer expectations are rising, and whilst the council strives to meet the needs of its customers, there is increasing pressure to deliver more services with less resources
- the town has become home to a number of families and individuals fleeing war and violence, with Crawley having one of the highest concentrations of asylum seekers residing in Home Office funded hotels in the south east. The eviction at short notice of households granted leave to remain in the country often leaves people with no option other than to approach the council for advice and assistance. No additional funding has been provided to support these households and the additional demand is adding to the strain on resources
- the previous governments decision to issue British citizenship to households formerly from the Chagos islands has led to a significant increase in approaches in Crawley, impacting both the borough and county council. Whilst funding has been made available to local authorities in England and Wales, its timing and scope is limited and ultimately will not cover all costs incurred in supporting these households
- the diverse nature of households approaching the council for advice and assistance means that English is not always an applicant's first language. Tackling language barriers and ensuring services are accessible to all who need them has become increasingly important

The challenges we face are significant. Our commitments and plans under this strategy are therefore ambitious but necessary if we are to achieve our vision that:

- homelessness is brief and does not reoccur
- its impact on the household and our communities is minimised
- it is prevented where possible

### 1.3 Corporate priorities

The council have six corporate priorities that set out its strategic direction:

- delivering value for money and modernising the way we work
- delivering affordable homes for Crawley and addressing homelessness
- enabling a sustainable economic recovery and improving local job opportunities
- reconnecting communities
- providing high quality leisure and culture facilities and supporting health and wellbeing services
- protecting the environment

The councils' corporate priorities are the driving force behind its strategies, plans and policies.



## 2.0 National context – local impact

### 2.1 National context

While the UK economy has in many ways recovered from the shock of the pandemic, by the latter half of 2022 inflation had risen significantly, impacting the poorest households most severely. Compounded by wider global events, energy, food and other prices started to drive a cost-of-living crisis and decrease in disposable income.

The government delivered packages for addressing the cost-of-living crisis, including lump sum payments to those in receipt of means-tested benefits and payments to reduce fuel bills to all householders. Nonetheless, the poorest households continue to be the hardest hit, a situation only exacerbated by increasing housing costs.

Support to increase universal credit in April 2023 in line with inflation will have had a positive impact, however, due to cuts and freezes in the basic rate of benefit entitlements since 2010, significant pressure remains for many households.

Whilst the further measure to restore Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates to 30th percentile of market rent from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 should see a boost in support for some, with the benefit cap formula remaining unchanged, many households in receipt of benefits will still see minimal to no increase in support. With these factors and drivers, it is believed that housing insecurity will remain an acute risk for many households in the future.

### 2.2 Local impact

For in-depth analysis of homelessness in Crawley please view the ‘Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2019 to 2023’. Headline data from the review is as follows:

#### Housing market

- in 2023 the median income in Crawley was £34,385 yet the median house price was £345,625, over 10 times as much. In five years, median annual gross salaries rose by nearly £5,000 but median house prices in Crawley increased by over £55,500

#### Private rented sector

- in May 2024 the average rent in Crawley was £1,333 per month, and the average monthly shortfall between rent and the Local Housing Allowance ranged from £276 (shortfall) for a room in a shared house to £961 (shortfall) for a four-bedroom house

#### Social housing

- the annual supply of social housing for allocation via the housing register decreased by over 200 properties (from over 650 to less than 440), and in 2023 was at the lowest it has been in ten years
- this was compounded by the delivery of new build social housing halving during that time due to the impact of water neutrality restrictions on development locally

## Homeless approaches and referrals

- approaches from households who believed themselves to be homeless or threatened with homelessness increased by 74%, from nearly 1300 in 2019 to over 2230 in 2023
- the number of referrals into the service (from external agencies) rose from 25 in 2019 to 206 in 2023
- in 2022 the end of a tenancy in the private rented sector took over from parental eviction as the most common reason for homelessness and in 2023 being required to leave Home Office accommodation became the third most common reason for homelessness

## Temporary accommodation

- the average cost of hotel style temporary accommodation almost doubled, from £50 per night in 2019, to £92 per night in 2023
- the number of households in temporary accommodation rose from 158 to 467, and this upward trend is continuing
- 2019 saw 20 households placed out of borough, rising to 274 in 2023 (this is over a quarter of the placements made in 2023) and is a consequence of lack of supply of suitable accommodation in-borough

## Rough sleeping

- the number of people sleeping on the streets halved, from 33 to 16
- whilst the rate of people sleeping rough per 100,000 population more than halved (from 29.4 to 13.4), it remains higher than that of the south east (7.1) and England (6.8), and all other West Sussex local authorities with the exception of one

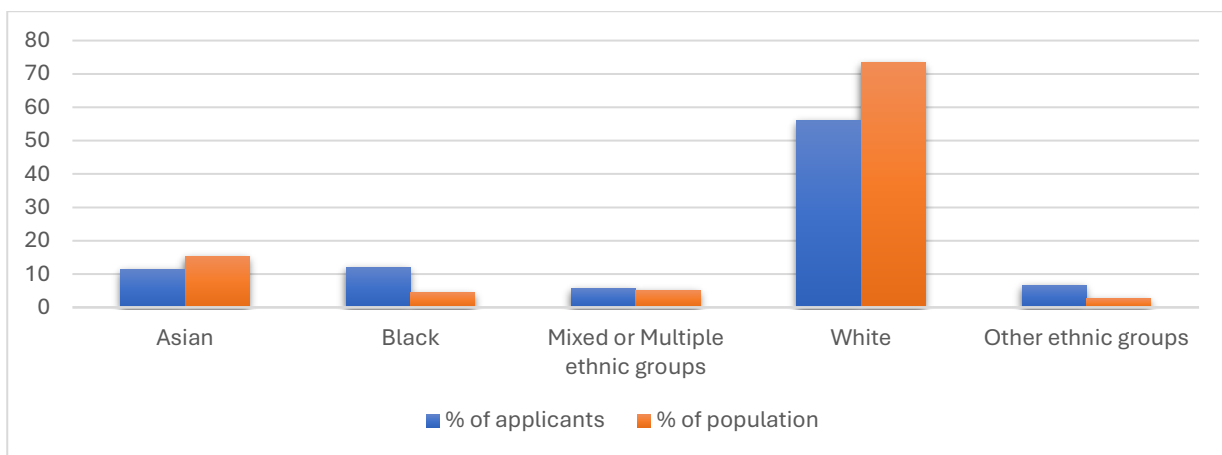


### 3.0 Equalities, diversity and inclusion

The public sector equality duty (introduced through the Equality Act 2010) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people when carrying out their activities. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2019 to 2023 found that homelessness affects people and communities differently within Crawley, a summary of which is included here.

**Ethnicity** - People who describe their ethnicity as black, mixed or from multiple ethnic groups, and other are overrepresented when compared with the population of Crawley, see chart one. This is in part due to approaches from people relocating from other countries who wish to live in the UK (including Chagossian households), and former refugees and asylum seekers who have been granted permission to remain in the country.

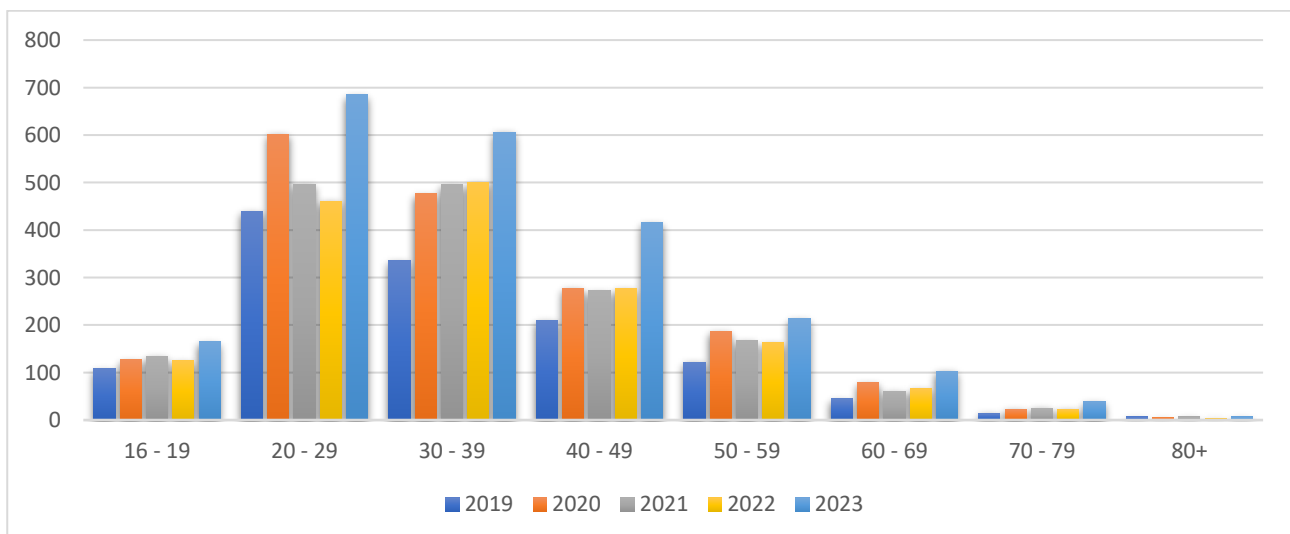
Chart one – Ethnicity of applicants in 2023 compared with the population of Crawley.



Source: Crawley Borough Council

Chart two shows the age profile of applicants making a homeless application, showing a rising trend across all age groups, but with a marked increase in applicants in their 20's and 40's between 2022 to 2023.

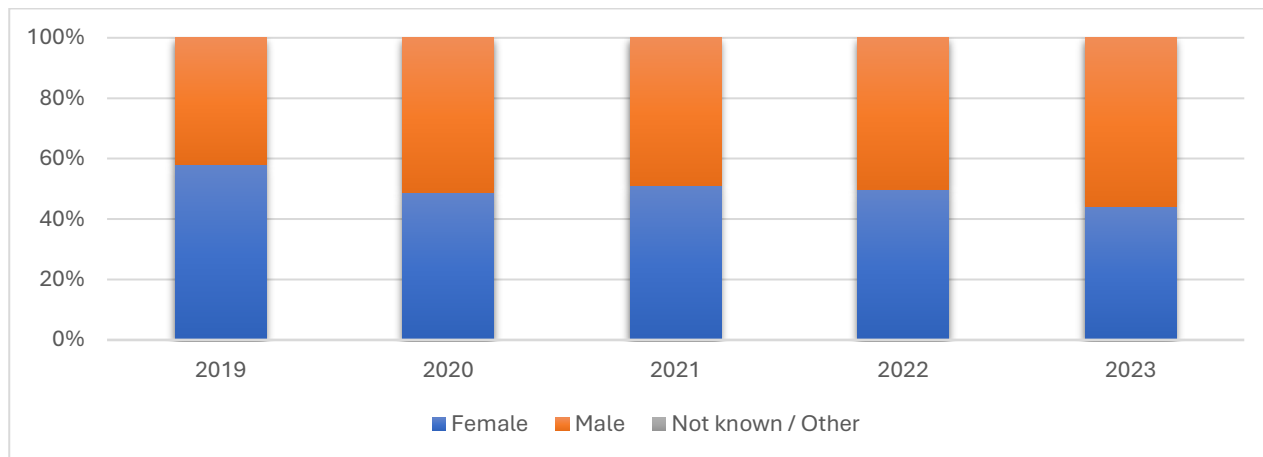
Chart two – Age of applicants.



Source: Crawley Borough Council

**Gender** - Prior to 2020 the majority of applicants were female (see chart three). This shifted in 2020 due to the ‘Everyone In’ initiative introduced by central government during the Covid pandemic to accommodate people who had been sleeping rough, as the majority of rough sleepers in Crawley are male. Male applicants are now overrepresented when compared with the population of Crawley.

*Chart three – Gender of applicants.*

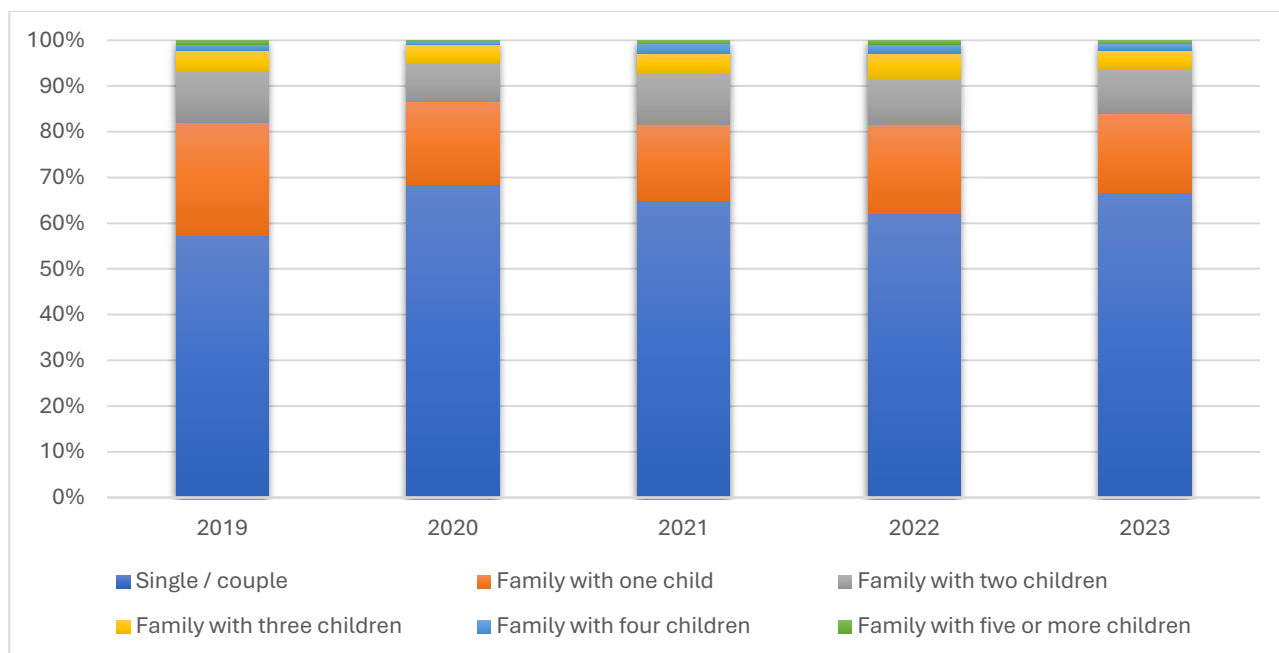


Source: Crawley Borough Council

Note: Gender options are specified by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), now the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

**Household composition** - The percentage of approaches from single people remains high and is consistently above 50%, see chart four. This is partly due to the volume of young people being asked to leave the family home and applying to the council as homeless. A more recent trend is the increasing number of larger families (with four or more children) approaching, increasing the need for larger temporary and settled housing options.

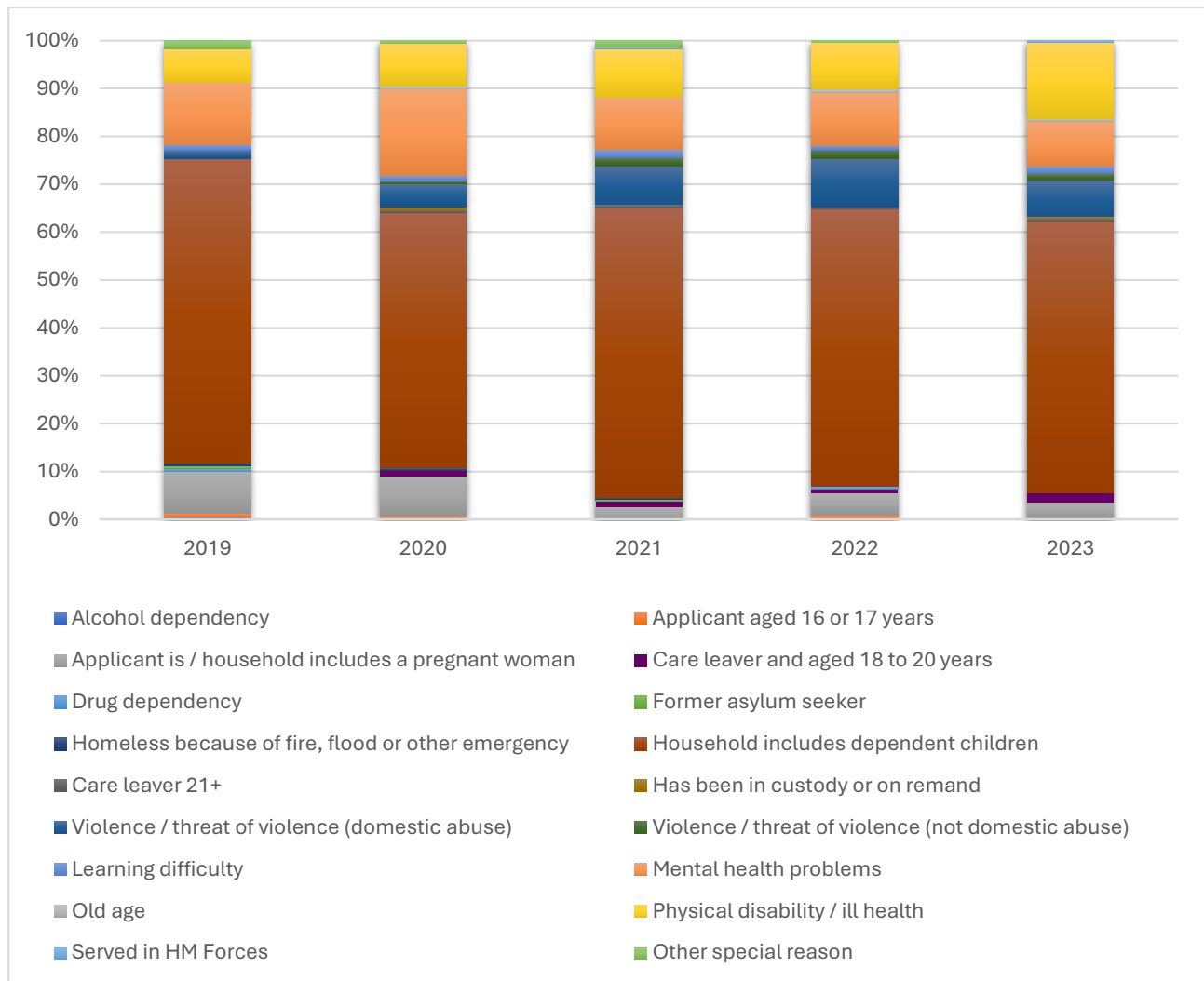
*Chart four – Composition of applicant households.*



Source: Crawley Borough Council

The majority of households owed a main duty are families with one or more dependent children as their reason for being in priority need, see chart five.

Chart five – Priority need of applicants owed a main housing duty.



Source: Crawley Borough Council

**Disability** – When assessing a homeless application, local authorities consider whether an applicant is in priority need (meaning they are vulnerable due to physical/mental ill health or for reasons connected to their circumstances). Disability can be a priority need under homelessness legislation, however the presence of dependent children within a household remains the most common reason for being in priority need. The data suggests that physical disability/ill health is increasing as a reason for being in priority need (from 7% in 2019 to 16% in 2023) and is an emerging trend to be aware of (see chart five).

The public sector equality duty came into force in April 2011 and was created under the Equality Act 2010. The council's '*Corporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement*' clearly sets out the principles we aim to follow and supports our commitment to the public sector equality duty. It applies to all aspects of the council's functions, including:

- the provision of direct services
- the commissioning and procurement of goods and services
- the recruitment, employment, training, and development of staff
- consultation with local people and in our partnerships with other organisations
- when exercising our statutory powers and responsibilities

A key focus is to ensure that council services and policy-making processes are designed to address social and economic inequalities. Crawley's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy embraces and incorporates this focus throughout. The council will:

- ensure services are accessible
- ensure policies and practices do not discriminate, either directly or indirectly
- understand the needs of its communities and of those seeking assistance
- ensure it can respond to changing trends

Crawley Borough Council are committed to prevent or end the homelessness of those seeking our help. Whichever route brings people into our services, we aim to act swiftly and effectively, with compassion, fairness, and respect. To address the issues and imbalances identified in the review we intend to:

- ensure that we understand and respond to issues that disproportionately affect specific groups in our community. For example, applicants describing their ethnicity as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British are overrepresented when compared to the overall population in Crawley. We will seek to understand the reasons behind this and proactively engage with service users to improve our services
- routinely report and use data to understand shifts in the profiles of people that we support in relation to homelessness, in order to target support and ensure that changes are not due to inaccessibility of services
- conduct comprehensive equality impact assessments in line with best practice for key policy changes to ensure that there is equitable access to our services for people with protected characteristics
- ensure information and communication is clear, understandable, and accessible

## 4.0 Accessibility of services

Historically, the councils housing and homelessness services saw the majority of customers approach in person, and provide documentation in hard copy, either by post or handing it in at the town hall. This proved to be a costly and ineffective way of delivering services. The ability to apply to the council as homeless and submit supporting documentation online was introduced and has been in place for a number of years. This minimised the disruption to homelessness services during the pandemic when offices closed, and services moved wholly to digital and phone contact for a time.

Offering opportunities for people to provide information and access our services online has helped make our services more accessible and efficient, however accessing services digitally or via the phone is not an option for everyone. We therefore reaffirm our commitment to offer face-to-face services for people who need our assistance and who would otherwise struggle to access our services.

## 5.0 Our approach

Delivering affordable homes for Crawley and addressing homelessness is one of the council's corporate priorities. This will be achieved by:

- working collaboratively with other statutory and voluntary sector agencies in supporting those facing homelessness within the borough. Lobbying government for the appropriate financial support to fund homelessness services
- continuing to deliver as much affordable housing as possible, particularly council housing, through our own-build and enabling programmes for people with a local connection to Crawley and to meet our other statutory duties
- continuing to work with neighbouring councils in the spirit of partnership to collectively deliver housing to meet Crawley's needs through the 'duty to cooperate arrangements'
- delivering improvements to the management of the council's housing stock in line with legislative reform, ensuring that customers are at the heart of service delivery and feel safe and secure in their tenancies

Consideration has been given to the priorities within the previous strategy and the focus of priority one has shifted to promote a greater focus on prevention and early intervention, reflecting evidence that better outcomes can be achieved at an earlier stage. The needs of vulnerable people have been reflected throughout the strategy and within the priorities for the coming years. Specific actions in relation to meeting the needs of those households have been incorporated into each of the priorities of this strategy.

To enable the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to deliver the objectives above, we have identified four priorities that will shape and focus housing and homelessness service delivery over the duration of this strategy.

**Priority One – Prevention and early intervention**

**Priority Two – Maximising the supply of suitable accommodation**

**Priority Three – Tackling rough sleeping and single homelessness**

**Priority Four – Preventing repeat homelessness**

## 5.1 Priority One – Prevention and early intervention

Homelessness can be symptomatic of deeper issues. Frequently these underlying causes have not been adequately addressed by the services the person has come into contact with. Often this is because the person does not meet relevant service thresholds where the right expertise may otherwise be available, or because services can sometimes, even when trying to operate collectively, work in isolation. Sometimes the person in need of help is viewed by agencies, including our own, through the lens of our own constraints. This strategy looks to challenge that approach and rethink how we work with people and support agencies to improve outcomes for service users.

At different points in people’s lives there are specific triggers and risk factors that impact the likelihood that a person will experience homelessness. However, homelessness is not an inevitable consequence of these drivers, as many people who experience them do not go on to become homeless. Understanding the events that may lead to or contribute towards homelessness (as shown in figure 1) assists the council in highlighting who is most at risk of becoming homeless and therefore which organisations and services the council need to work with to maximise opportunities for early intervention and the prevention of homelessness.

Figure 1 - Triggers and risk factors associated with homelessness

|                      | 0 - 10 years  | 11 - 15 years   | 16 - 24 years  | 25 - 44 years    | 45 - 59 years | 60 + years |
|----------------------|---|-----------------|--|------------------|---------------|------------|
| Contact with         | Adverse childhood experiences   |                 | Family conflict and relationship breakdown                 |                  |               |            |
| Services             | Child in need/looked after child  |                 | Care leaver  | Vulnerable adult |               |            |
|                      |   | Youth offending | Released from prison                                       |                  |               |            |
|                      |   |                 | Discharged from armed forces                               |                  |               |            |
|                      |   |                 | Discharged from hospital without appropriate accommodation |                  |               |            |
|                      |   |                 | Refugees required to leave Home Office accommodation       |                  |               |            |
| Social Conditions    | Domestic abuse  |                 |  |                  |               |            |
| And Experiences      | Involved or affected by crime, anti-social behaviour, harassment, or discrimination |                 |  |                  |               |            |
|                      | Poor educational attainment   |                 | Lack of qualifications and skills                          |                  |               |            |
|                      |   | Teen pregnancy  |  |                  |               |            |
|                      | Insecure or unsuitable housing conditions, disrepair, overcrowding, sofa surfing    |                 |  |                  |               |            |
|                      | Poor physical and/or mental health, disability, substance misuse, history of trauma |                 |  |                  |               |            |
| Economic Deprivation | Shortage of affordable, suitable housing  |                 |  |                  |               |            |
|                      |   |                 | Low income, debt, pay day loans, rent arrears              |                  |               |            |
|                      |   |                 | Lack of employment   |                  |               |            |
|                      |   |                 | Lack of affordable childcare                               |                  |               |            |
| Welfare Related      |   |                 | Benefit delays, sanctions, conditions                      |                  |               |            |
|                      |   |                 | Benefit caps   |                  |               |            |

Source: [Radical Safeguarding Toolkit - Homelessness](#)

## What are we doing to prevent homelessness?

- we have commissioned Citizens Advice to provide a money advice service (covering issues such as debt management, budgeting and income maximisation) to service users to help them better manage and sustain their accommodation
- the housing register contains a range of options to assist in the prevention of homelessness, from broader options (such as households who are overcrowded) to targeted options (such as those for care leavers looking to live independently)
- a county wide bid via Stonepillow was awarded Accommodation For Ex-Offenders (AFEO) funding for a support worker to assist prison leavers to identify and access accommodation (and other relevant services) before being released from prison
- the provision of drop-in sessions at hotels utilised by the Home Office to accommodate asylum seekers enabled the provision of advice and assistance to people before they received notice to leave their Home Office accommodation. This has become increasingly challenging as notice periods often give insufficient time to arrange accommodation upon leaving
- through arrangements within the councils Housing Allocation Scheme, we are able to access a limited number of supported accommodation options (such as YMCA Crawley Foyer) for homeless prevention purposes
- one of Crawley's main causes of homelessness is parental exclusion. By increasing home visits, especially to cases such as these, we hope to more effectively work with excluders to prevent homelessness



## How can we better prevent homelessness?

- ensure the Housing Allocation Scheme is aligned to maximise opportunities for the prevention of homelessness, including assisting households that live within another household (frequently referred to as “homeless at home”) to access accommodation without needing to approach the council as homeless
- through the council’s Tenancy Strategy, encourage providers to consider how to design their tenancy policies to best protect victims of domestic abuse (such as by preventing the survivor from having to move, apply as homeless, or keep them tied to a joint tenancy while separation proceedings are progressed)
- introduce mediation training to assist council officers when engaging with service users and excluders to maximise the likelihood of a successful prevention outcome
- consider the introduction of homelessness advisory outreach sessions into the community and local businesses to assist in the early identification of those at risk of homelessness and maximise the opportunities for timely early intervention and prevention work
- provide homelessness training to other council services and relevant voluntary sector organisations to assist in the early identification of households at risk of becoming homeless. Introduce a voluntary referral mechanism into the service (with the consent of the household) so that council homelessness services can advise and assist at the earliest opportunity
- work with other council divisions and government departments to ensure we are using data to identify and target services at people at risk of becoming homeless, such as households applying for a discretionary housing payment for example
- provide information in a variety of formats to maximise accessibility, such as through social media and use of the council’s You Tube channel for example

## 5.2 Priority Two – Maximising the supply of suitable accommodation

### Why do we need more affordable housing?

Crawley is a compact new town of 40km<sup>2</sup> with a population of approximately 118,500 (as of the 2021 census). It is the 10th most densely populated of the South East's 65 local authority areas, with 18.8 people living on each football pitch-sized piece of land (compared to 16.9 in 2011). The borough encapsulates Crawley town, Gatwick Airport, and Manor Royal Business District, with limited land opportunities for the development of housing.

Compounding the limited availability of housing sites, the delivery of new build housing has been severely impacted by the declaration by Natural England of water neutrality restrictions in the borough. This means that where development is located within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone, it must demonstrate that it will not increase pressure on water resources (in that total water use after the development must be equal to or less than the water-use before the development). Due to water neutrality restrictions, 2023/2024 saw the delivery of new build social housing decrease by nearly 70% from 2019/2020 levels, resulting in the supply of housing for allocation via the housing register reduce by over 200 properties. This reduction in the delivery of new build social housing is forecasted to continue until 2026/2027.

A reduction in the delivery of social housing increases the pressure to access the private rented sector, however Crawley's location in the southeast and its proximity to London mean that rents in the private sector remain high. Average rents in Crawley are frequently above £1,400, and the shortfall between rent and the Local Housing Allowance ranges from approx. £280 per month for a room in a shared house, to £960 per month for a four-bed house. ONS data from 2023 confirms that rents in Crawley are above the regional and national average. The result of these challenges is that the council's ability to access the private rented sector has halved over the past five years, increasing the pressure on social housing to meet the gap in supply.

The combined lack of social and affordable private rented homes into which homeless duties can be discharged, combined with an increase in approaches, has led to the total number of households in temporary accommodation tripling over the five-year review period. The average cost of nightly paid temporary accommodation has almost doubled during this time. Overall expenditure on temporary accommodation is at a level that without additional financial support from central government, the council will be in an unsustainable financial position going forward. It is imperative that we explore and invest in temporary accommodation solutions that meet the needs of the service both now and in the future.

## What homes do we need?

**Current demand** - The council maintains a register of households in housing need, with their priority assessed using the banding system set out in the council's Housing Allocation Scheme. Whilst larger properties are not in the greatest demand by volume, the demand is disproportionate when compared with the supply of such properties. For every four or five-bedroom property that became available in 2023 there were 20 households waiting for it. Whereas for every two-bedroom property that became available in 2023, there were three households waiting for it.

The total number of households on the housing register also increased by over 500 households (29%) in five years, indicating a need for housing of all sizes, however during this time the demand for four- or five-bedroom properties increased from 7% to 11% of total demand. Part of this growth can be explained by the increasing number of larger households approaching the council as homeless, going on to have a duty accepted and being placed on to the housing register. This signals a growing demand for larger, affordable housing options in the borough, including the provision of larger units of suitable temporary accommodation.

**Future demand** - The council's Local Plan sets the way forward for planning the future of Crawley and provides a clear indication of the council's approach to the development of the town, including how housing need has been identified within the borough and the work underway to meet this need. The Northern West Sussex Strategic Housing Market Assessment published by Icenii in 2019 identified that by 2040 Crawley would need a further 15,050 new homes to support the housing needs of the growing population of the town, 752 dwellings a year. Due to land supply constraints, it is likely that a proportion of the towns identified housing need will need to be met within neighbouring boroughs and achieved through the duty to cooperate.

## How will we deliver the homes we need?

### Social rented housing -

- developing and implementing an affordable housing delivery programme that identifies and looks to meet housing need in the borough
- providing advice and guidance to internal and external stakeholders as part of the planning and development process on the housing needs and requirements of local communities to ensure the delivery of a mix of dwelling types, sizes and tenures, including specialist accommodation
- developing and maintaining strategic relationships with internal and external stakeholders to optimise delivery of the council's affordable housing programmes and strategic objectives
- bidding on funding opportunities as and when they become available
- through the duty to cooperate, continue to work with neighbouring boroughs towards meeting Crawley's identified housing need

- keep the Housing Allocation Scheme under review to ensure that it is responsive to the changing pressures on the service
- review the councils offer to social tenants under occupying their homes to encourage them to free up much needed larger home for allocation
- improve the links into West Sussex County Council regarding commissioning and accessing supported housing options

### **Private rented housing –**

- identify how other local authorities are accessing the private rented sector, factoring in the countywide project covering West Sussex. Utilise this information to identify how the council can increase access to the private rented sector in Crawley
- produce an information pack for clients advising on all aspects of the private rented sector, from how and where to search for accommodation, through to what to do once you have started a tenancy
- through the quarterly landlords’ forum organised by the council, encourage landlords to work with us in the provision of temporary accommodation through the council’s private sector leasing scheme and the granting of tenancies to households owed a homeless duty
- consider the introduction of discharging homeless duties into the private rented sector out of borough where this constitutes an appropriate housing pathway for applicants

### **Temporary accommodation –**

- where available, identify and bid for funding opportunities (such as the local authority housing fund) to expand temporary accommodation provision through acquisition
- identify new providers of temporary accommodation that deliver good quality accommodation at the right price. Negotiate and agree prices and practices through a service level agreement

The council will also continue to lobby central government regarding the disparity between local housing allowances and rents, the level of temporary accommodation subsidy and the impact of water neutrality on the councils housing delivery programme.

## Maximising access to existing social housing

Through the councils Tenancy Strategy, registered providers of social housing are encouraged not to put in place measures that might hinder access to social housing.

- households are not denied access to social housing due to upfront payments such as rent in advance or deposits. Where such payments are required, registered providers are advised to offer flexible payment options
- where an individual or household would benefit from assistance to enable them to succeed in their tenancy, efforts are made to identify this at an early stage and provide the appropriate support
- potential refusal of a nomination is discussed with the local authority in order that any issues or concerns are addressed (where possible) to enable the nomination to proceed
- registered providers carrying out their own affordability assessments are advised to take a reasonable and flexible approach to determining affordability and to discuss any issues with the local authority in order that they are addressed (where possible) to enable the nomination to proceed
- where appropriate (and data protection legislation allows), information is shared with housing providers to assist them to identify and respond to a new tenant's potential support needs

## 5.3 Priority Three – Tackling rough sleeping and single homelessness

Rough sleeping is the most acute and extreme form of homelessness and is defined as people seen either sleeping, about to bed down or actually bedded down in the open air (such as streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, sheds, car parks and cars) are also included in this definition.

Many people who sleep rough, especially those that have become entrenched, have complex needs that can affect their willingness to engage with service providers and receive support. Even with support in place, some do not feel ready or able to engage with the services that are available. The ‘Everyone In’ initiative introduced by the government during the emergence of the Covid pandemic tasked local authorities with accommodating people sleeping rough to minimise the risk to their health. This provided opportunities to engage with individuals who are sometimes resistant to offers of assistance. Since the funding associated with the Everyone In initiative ceased, it has not been possible to continue to offer discretionary placements at this level, and rough sleeper numbers have increased.

### Emerging issues

As the impact of the Covid pandemic begins to fade away, the demand from the Everyone In initiative is being replaced with demand from former asylum seekers granted permission to live and work in this country, and from Chagosian households applying for access to housing after being granted British citizenship. Where single people are not owed a duty, or not in priority need and therefore not offered temporary accommodation, this can leave them with few or no housing options available to them. Despite the restrictions on what we can do to support people who do not have recourse to public funds, as a council, we are committed to the town being a welcoming place to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

### Government approach

The ‘Ending Rough Sleeping Strategy’ published by what was the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in September 2022 sets out the vision that rough sleeping will have ended when every local authority ensures rough sleeping is ‘prevented wherever possible and, where it cannot be prevented, it is a rare, brief and non-recurring experience’. To achieve this vision, a four-pronged approach was developed:

- better prevention to reduce the number of people reaching the streets in the first place
- swift and effective intervention for those who do sleep rough
- additional targeted support for those that need it for their recovery (including specialist accommodation)
- a more transparent and joined-up system to ensure everyone is working together effectively to end rough sleeping

It is intended that this be achieved through three core principles: prevention, intervention and recovery and these principles will drive our approach to tackling rough sleeping.

## How are we tackling rough sleeping and single homelessness?

### Prevention:

- a county wide bid via Stonepillow was awarded Accommodation For Ex-Offenders (AFEO) funding for a support worker to assist prison leavers to identify and access accommodation (and other relevant services) before being released from prison
- the provision of drop-in sessions at hotels utilised by the Home Office to accommodate asylum seekers has enabled the provision of advice and assistance to people before they receive notice to leave their Home Office accommodation. This is become increasingly challenging as notice periods often give insufficient time to arrange accommodation
- access to the housing register for people coming out of care or supported accommodation who are ready for independent living (and might otherwise be at risk of sleeping rough)

### Intervention:

- Crawley's Rough Sleeper / Street Community Group meet monthly to facilitate a multi-agency approach to support rough sleepers off the street and into long term accommodation, monitor the levels of rough sleeping and street community activity, share information and intelligence, reduce the level of risk and impact that they have on the local community, services and business through targeted support and enforcement (where unavoidable). The group includes representatives from Sussex Police, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Adult Social Care at West Sussex County Council, Gatwick Business Watch, third sector partners, and divisions across the council including the Community Wardens and Strategic Housing
- working in partnership with external agencies, the creation of the rough sleeper multidisciplinary team (a Rough Sleeper Coordinator, Drug and Alcohol Outreach Worker, Mental Health Outreach Worker, Outreach/In-reach Worker, Resettlement Outreach Worker and Day Centre resettlement Worker who deliver holistic, person-centered services
- training for the multi-disciplinary team on the use and implementation of trauma inform practice within their work with the rough sleeping community
- delivery of 11 move on bed spaces for people with no other accommodation options available to them via Crawley Open House (a hostel and day centre within Crawley)
- delivery of ten council owned hostel rooms with targeted support in place for rough sleepers
- Crawley Open House expanded to create a separate resource centre and open the Laing rooms, eight self-contained flats for use as move on accommodation

- the introduction of a housing led pilot project utilizing five one-bedroom self-contained flats, with high level support provided by Turning Tides
- engagement of Beam to assist ten people who have or are at risk of rough sleeping to access and sustain accommodation in the private rented sector
- linking in with roles funded by West Sussex County Council and delivered through the Changing Futures programme, including the drug and alcohol treatment grant
- co-location of a mental health housing specialist (funded by the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust) within the council's homelessness services to facilitate and support joint working
- the frequency, timing and extent of street outreach has been broadened to better ensure that the service meets the needs of the council, partner organisations and its service users
- the ongoing provision of accommodation and support under the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol, including the provision of water, sunscreen and cool spaces during periods of extremely hot weather
- access to the housing register for former rough sleepers coming out of move on accommodation who are ready for independent living
- nomination of a rough sleeping lead on the Adult Services WSCC safeguarding board
- annual and monthly data submissions to inform government and shape future decisions, along with monthly meeting with a rough sleeping MHCLG advisor

#### Recovery:

- the Drug and Alcohol Worker commissioned via CGL provides and links service users to a range of services, including needle exchange, methadone prescription, and accessing residential rehabilitation services



## How will we tackle rough sleeping and single homelessness?

The councils rough sleeping services, including the multidisciplinary team and outreach services, are funded by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government administered funding streams such as the 'Rough Sleeper Initiative' (RSI), that ends on 31 March 2025. At the time of drafting the strategy it was not known whether funding will continue beyond this point, which makes planning the future of rough sleeping services in the borough impossible, as without it the majority of rough sleeping services would cease to operate as the council and its partner organisations are not in a position to self-fund the work.

### Prevention:

- create and introduce a risk assessment to identify people most at risk of rough sleeping and signpost to them services who can offer support and increase the likelihood of them not becoming rough sleepers
- explore and implement a means of assisting single people to access housing
- funding dependent, utilise specialist roles within the multidisciplinary team to work with individuals who are accommodated but at risk of losing their accommodation
- work with those with lived experience of rough sleeping to better explore and understand the reasons for homelessness and seek to ensure that we are identifying and addressing these risks at an early stage
- continue to develop our preventative work to reduce the number of households presenting to homelessness services
- work with partner organisations and agencies to encourage the use of early voluntary referrals into the council's homelessness services, to assist us to identify and engage with people who might be at risk of rough sleeping were they to become homeless

### Intervention:

- utilise the rough sleeping lead in the adult services WSCC safeguarding board to increase access to and buy in from adult social services
- funding dependent, consider introducing a 'safe seat' (a bed space reserved for those who would otherwise experience their first night of rough sleeping) to provide an opportunity to engage with and assist people and potentially prevent them from moving onto the streets
- funding dependent, support the specialist roles within the multidisciplinary team (the mental health and drug and alcohol navigators) to take a flexible approach when working with individuals who are rough sleeping, by taking services to clients where needed, to encourage engagement

- funding dependent, the council have identified that it would be beneficial to have a range of accommodation options at our disposal, including the expansion of off the street and move on options
- roll out trauma informed practice training across the homelessness service and keep training needs under review

### Recovery:

- the focus of recovery services should be to offer the right support at the right time, to stop the revolving door of addiction and homelessness. We will work alongside partner organisations and agencies to support clients to access services that focus on and enable their recovery

Alongside the actions identified under the principles of prevention, intervention and recovery, the council will:

- maximise opportunities to bid for grant funding for rough sleeper services
- assess the service against the rough sleeping toolkit (created by Homeless Link) to identify opportunities to improve service delivery
- revisit the governance structure of existing meetings to ensure that they meet the needs of the council going forward

## 5.4 Priority Four – Preventing repeat homelessness

The financial and human cost of homelessness is at its highest when it is continual or recurrent, from higher rates of service use (such as medical intervention and criminal justice) to the impact on a person's mental and physical wellbeing. Without the right measures in place, homelessness can become a revolving door of seeking assistance, accessing services, only to later become homeless again. The reasons for this vary as people's circumstances are unique, however there are factors that can increase the likelihood of a person experiencing repeat homelessness:

- not having the life skills (such as budgeting, managing debts, understanding utilities and other bills) or support necessary to sustain a tenancy
- being unable to access the right type of accommodation (such as being offered/living in general needs housing when supported accommodation is needed)
- fluctuating income affecting the affordability of accommodation, for example by being on a zero hours contract
- the volatility of the private rented sector, as tenancies are frequently ended at the end of the fixed term so that rents can be increased

One of the most cost-effective means of preventing repeat homelessness is to assist people to sustain their tenancy. Through the council's Tenancy Strategy, registered providers of social housing are encouraged to provide effective tenancy management services that support tenants to sustain their tenancy:

- welfare visits during the lifespan of a tenancy, or as and when a needed
- assistance with rehousing where financial hardship would lead to tenancy failure if left unmanaged
- timely financial advice, looking at budgeting, managing debt, and income maximization (including benefit entitlement), especially where a tenant is falling into arrears and may be at risk of losing their home in the future if action is not taken
- tenant wellbeing services (working with tenants on issues such as mental health)
- tailored support, for example for young people living independently for the first time as this can increase their chances of successfully sustaining their tenancy
- providing or signposting tenants towards organisations that can help them gain skills that would assist them in seeking employment, education or training (such as computer literacy, CV writing)
- a proactive and timely approach to tackling and addressing antisocial behaviour, liaising with tenants, the council and elected members where necessary
- a proactive and timely approach to dealing with complaints of disrepair and properties in a poor condition

## What are we doing to prevent repeat homelessness?

- Employ Crawley - Provides one-to-one tailored support to local people to help them access employment support, advice and guidance within Crawley
- Citizens Advice – Alongside the services they provide to the general public, they are commissioned to provide money advice to clients (including debt advice, money management and budgeting, income maximisation)
- Transform Housing – Commissioned to provide floating support to households in temporary accommodation and tenancies created by the Council
- Pathways Home (Southdown Housing) – Commissioned to support clients to work towards building a pathway to independent living
- Turning Tides – Commissioned to support clients of the councils housing-led pilot project, including the ongoing sustainment of the tenancies created
- where a rough sleeper is part of the target priority group (a requirement of the MHCLG), they will have a named lead officer (from within the multidisciplinary team) and an action plan, regardless of whether they are accommodated
- access to the household support fund issued by West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) for items such as white goods to support the creation of a successful and sustainable tenancy
- as a stock holding local authority, through our landlord function Crawley Homes we provide pre-tenancy support, tenancy support (including financial inclusion) and swift response to allegations of anti-social behaviour

## How can we continue to prevent repeat homelessness?

- create and introduce an information pack(s) for young people / people moving into their own home for the first time. Include subjects such as bills (what to expect, when, and how to pay them), budgeting and money management, and income maximisation (through entitlement to benefits for example)
- consider the introduction of additional tenancy creation/sustainment options, such as tenancy workshops, renters CV's, with a view to building resilience to prevent crisis
- signpost to services advising in areas such as employment, financial inclusion, health and wellbeing, and ensure clients have ongoing access to services after being accommodated and having a homeless duty discharged
- consider introducing a resettlement offer / role, that focuses on assisting former clients to sustain their tenancies
- work alongside the local community network, introduce an informative leaflet to provide to households being placed into temporary accommodation that explains their rights and responsibilities, and what additional support is available to them

## 6.0 GOVERNANCE AND DELIVERY

The Action Plan that accompanies this strategy (published separately) sets out how the council will deliver its commitments over the life of the strategy. The Action Plan will be monitored quarterly and reviewed and updated annually. This will ensure that it is able to adapt and respond to an evolving environment, remains relevant, and plays a key role in driving work around housing, homelessness and rough sleeping across the organisation and partner agencies.

A monitoring and update report, and recommendations for revisions to the action plan, will be presented annually to the Head of Strategic Housing and Cabinet Member for Housing for approval, and will be implemented and published at the start of each financial year.

This strategy was approved by full council on 11 December 2024 and covers a period of five years from 2025 to 2029. It is difficult to predict what is going to happen in this time, and undoubtedly there will be changes to legislation, regulation and wider societal and economic shifts that will have an impact on our communities and what we can and need to do as a council.

Whilst there will be changes to the context within which we operate and deliver this strategy, we do not anticipate that our vision and priorities will need to change as they are long-term and sufficiently flexible to be responsive to the evolving environment. We remain committed to delivering these priorities throughout the operational period of the strategy.

## 7.0 GLOSSARY

This glossary is intended to help readers gain an understanding of the terms used. It is not intended to give the precise legal definition of terms or words used.

**Affordable housing** – housing that is available to households who would otherwise not house themselves, for example because they would struggle to afford the cost of housing in the open market (to buy or to rent). Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. There are different types of affordable housing:

- **Social rented housing** is owned by local authorities and private registered providers, for which guideline target rents are determined through a national rent standard.
- **Affordable rented housing** is owned by local authorities and private registered providers of social housing and let to households who are eligible for social rented housing. **Affordable Rent** is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).
- **Shared ownership** is where a share of a dwelling is sold (between 25% and 75%) and the buyer pays rent on the remaining share.

**Asylum seeker** – a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but who hasn't yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim.

**Care leaver** – a person aged 25 or under, who has been looked after by a local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14; and who was looked after by the local authority at school-leaving age or after that date.

**Complex needs** – when someone has multiple support needs, and in the context of this strategy, when these needs each present a challenge in accessing mainstream accommodation.

**Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)** – this Government department is responsible for housing, communities, local government in England and is now known as the **Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)**.

**Homes England** – this is the government's housing, land and regeneration agency for England.

**Housing Allocation Scheme** – the Housing Allocation Scheme is the operational policy the council uses to assess housing need and prioritise customers on the housing register for an offer of social housing in Crawley.

**Housing-led** – a housing-led approach means that homelessness is resolved by offering people their own, secure home as quickly as possible, and is not conditional upon resolving other issues, such as substance dependency beforehand.

**Housing register** – Instead of the council and registered providers of social housing keeping their own different housing registers, applicants can join a single housing list that is administered by Crawley Borough Council.

**Local Housing Allowance (LHA)** – local housing allowance is a way of working out how much a person can get to help pay their rent and is based on how many bedrooms are needed to accommodate the household. The rates are set for broad rental market areas and are based on the lower percentage of rents in that area.

**Local Plan** – local plans set out the vision and framework for future development of an area and all local authorities have one. They address needs and opportunities in relation to the economy, housing, community facilities and infrastructure as well as provide a basis for safeguarding the environment, adapting to climate change and securing good design.

**Migrant** – a person staying outside their country of origin who is not an asylum seeker or refugee. Some migrants leave their country because they want to work, study or join family, for example. Others feel they must leave because of poverty, political unrest, or other serious circumstances that exist there.

**Refugee** - a person who has fled their own country because they are at risk of serious human rights violations and persecution there.

**Registered provider (RP)** – a registered provider is an organisation that owns social housing and that is regulated by the **Regulator of Social Housing** (see below). Through a nomination agreement with the council a percentage of their housing stock will be let via the housing register once it becomes available.

**Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)** – a non-departmental public body that regulates registered providers of social housing. This includes economic regulation focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money. The regulator also sets consumer standards and may take action if these standards are breached.

**Section 21 notice** – a section of the Housing Act 1988 which means that a landlord has to give notice to start the process to regain possession of the property. Under this section, a notice can be given to repossess properties without landlords having to establish fault on part of the tenant. Section 21 notices are therefore sometimes also called no-fault evictions.

**Temporary accommodation** – under certain circumstances the council has a legal obligation to provide temporary accommodation to homeless applicants, if required.

**Tenancy Strategy** – the purpose of a Tenancy Strategy is to help shape the tenancy policies of registered providers of affordable housing who operate in a local authority's district or borough by setting out the matters they are to have regard to when formulating their own policies.

**Tenure type** – refers to the way in which someone is occupying a property, for example as an owner of the property, renting a property, or owning part of a property (e.g. shared ownership).

**Universal Credit (UC)** – a benefit that brings together a range of benefits into one payment. It replaces a range of benefits such as Jobseekers Allowance, Housing Benefit, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Employment and Support Allowance, and Income Support.